

METALLURGICAL DEPARTMENT,
School of Mines, Columbia College,

CORNER 49TH STREET & 4TH AVENUE.

New York, DEC. 30TH, 1889.

E. O. LEECH, ESQ.,

DIRECTOR OF THE MINT,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DEAR SIR:

I WISH TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO WHAT I CONSIDER A SERIOUS MISTAKE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSAY COMMISSION WHICH MEETS ANNUALLY IN PHILADELPHIA. I HAVE BEEN AT DIFFERENT PERIODS THREE TIMES A MEMBER OF THAT COMMISSION AND EVERY TIME HAVE BEEN ON THE WEIGHING COMMITTEE AND IT HAS BEEN MY DUTY TO HANDLE THE TROY OUNCE, WHICH IS THE ONLY STANDARD OUNCE FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD, AS THE ORIGINAL FROM WHICH THIS WAS A COPY WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE IN LONDON. EVERY TIME THAT I HAVE OPENED THE BOX TO TAKE OUT THE OUNCE TO COMPARE IT I HAVE BEEN OBLIGED EITHER TO CLOSE THE BOX OR TO PUT MYSELF BETWEEN IT AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION WHO WISHED TO TAKE IT OUT OF THE BOX WITH THEIR HANDS, AND I HAVE ONCE OR TWICE FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PREVENT MEMBERS WHO HAD AS GOOD A RIGHT AS I HAD TO EXAMINE IT FROM TAKING IT, NOTWITHSTANDING MY EARNEST EXPOSTULATIONS. SOMETIMES IT HAS BEEN TAKEN WITH THE PINNERS AND CARRIED AROUND THE ROOM IN THE PINNERS, SO THAT EACH MEMBER COULD SEE IT, GREATLY TO THE DANGER OF DROPPING IT. ABRASION COMMENCES TO SHOW ON THIS WEIGHT, AS I REMEMBER IT, AND I WISH TO SUGGEST TO YOU, AND I HAVE WRITTEN A SIMILAR LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE COAST SURVEY, THAT SOME FORM OR CEREMONY OUGHT TO BE PRESCRIBED BY LAW FOR THE HANDLING OF AN INSTRUMENT UPON WHICH SO MUCH OF THE VALUE OF THE WORLD DEPENDS. THE ENGLISH WOULD BE OBLIGED TO COPY THIS, WE SHOULD BE OBLIGED TO COPY IT, AND I HAVE NO DOUBT NOW THAT IF IT COULD BE COMPARED WITH THE ORIGINAL WHICH HAS BEEN DESTROYED IT WOULD BE FOUND THAT ITS VALUE HAD BEEN CHANGED FROM IMPROPER HANDLING. I HAVE PROPOSED ONCE OR TWICE THAT THE COMMISSION SHOULD THEMSELVES PRESCRIBE A CEREMONY WITH REGARD TO IT, BUT FROM THE FACT THAT TWO PERSONS ARE RARELY APPOINTED TWICE IN THE SAME *following* YEARS AND ALSO FROM THE FACT THAT THE WEIGHING COMMITTEE HAS SO MUCH WORK TO DO AND THE WORK IS SO MUCH MORE LABORIOUS THAN THAT OF OTHER PARTS OF THE COMMISSION, THE COMMISSION ITSELF HAS TAKEN NO ACTION. IT HAS RARELY EVER BEEN COMPOSED, WHEN I HAVE BEEN ON IT, OF PERSONS WHO WOULD APPRECIATE ITS DELICACY AND THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH PRECAUTIONS.

I BEG TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS MATTER, AS THE PRESERVATION NOT ONLY OF THIS BUT OF OTHER STANDARDS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO BE RECEIVED IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE NEAR FUTURE DEMANDS THE MOST SERIOUS ATTENTION AND NOTHING DEMANDS IT MORE THAN THE STANDARDS AT THE MINT.

YOURS TRULY,

Wm. E. Lee

No.
64772

DIRECTOR, MINT.

REC. JAN. 10 1890

Treasury Department,
Bureau of the Mint.

January 10, 1890.

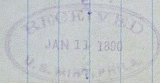
Respectfully referred to the
Superintendent of the mint at
Philadelphia, for his infor-
mation.

E. L. L.
Director.

New York
Dec 30, 1889

Thomas Ogleson

Rel to the handling of the
Army Quince (Standards) by
the Annual Assay Commission.



[Abstract:] Relative to the handling of the Troy ounce (standard) by the Annual Assay Commissioners.

Metallurgical Department,
School of Mines, Columbia College,
New York,
December 30, 1889

E.O. Leech, Esq.,
Director of the Mint,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I wish to call your attention to what I consider a serious mistake in the management of the assay commission which meets annually in Philadelphia. I have been at different periods three times a member of that commission and every time have been on the weighing committee and it has been my duty to handle the troy ounce, which is the only standard ounce for the entire world, as the original from which this was a copy was destroyed by fire in London. Every time that I have opened the box to take out the ounce to compare it I have been obliged either to close the box or to put myself between it and members of the commission who wish to take it out of the box with their hands, and I have once or twice found it impossible to prevent members who had as good a right as I had to examine it from taking it, notwithstanding my earnest expostulations. Sometimes it has been taken with the pincers and carried around the room in the pincers, so that each member could see it, greatly to the danger of dropping it. Abrasion commences to show on this weight, as I remember it, and I wish to suggest to you, and I have written a similar letter to the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, that some form or ceremony ought to be prescribed by law for the handling of an instrument upon which so much of the value of the world depends. The English would be obliged to copy this, we should be obliged it, and I have no doubt now that if it could be compared with the original which has been destroyed it would be found that its value has been changed from improper handling. I have proposed once or twice that the commission should themselves prescribe a ceremony with regard to it, but from the fact that two persons are rarely appointed twice in the following years, and also from the fact that the weighing committee has so much work to do and the work is so much more laborious that that of other parts of the commission, the commission itself has taken no action. It has rarely ever been composed, when I have been on it, of persons who would appreciate its delicacy and the necessity for such precautions.

I beg to call your attention to this matter, as the preservation not only of this but of other standards which are likely to be received in the United States in the near future demands the most serious attention and nothing demands it more than the standards at the Mint.

Yours Truly,
Thomas Egleston

NARA RG104, Entry 1, Box 161

[Noted on back:]

Treasury Department,
Bureau of the Mint.
January 10, 1890

Respectfully referred to the Superintendent of the mint at Philadelphia, for his
information.

E.O. Leech
Director.